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Urgency Incontinence in Children

STRESS INCONTINENCE IS NOT AN ENTITY WE GENERALLY RECOGNIZE IN THE PEDIATRIC POPULATION. Stress incontinence is incontinence with laughing, coughing, or lifting, and that's usually something we think of in older persons—the multiparous woman; the man with some prostatism or after prostatic surgery.

What we usually see in children is urgency incontinence, and that's entirely different. That's these uninhibited bladder contractions. There is a group of patients, generally adolescent girls, who have "giggle" incontinence. "Giggle" incontinence is one of the biggest pains in pediatric urology because it is untreatable. It is absolutely untreatable. These girls will be in a school situation with their friends, and you know how young girls are. They'll start talking, and suddenly someone will say "BOO," and they'll all explode in laughter . . . and one girl explodes from both ends. She's just sitting in a puddle of urine, and it's very embarrassing.

I've tried using an anti-cholinergic. I've tried exercises. I've sent some of them to the behavior-modification people at Johns Hopkins who are interested in this. In my youth, I even operated on one of these children, which I will never do again. It's untreatable. All you can do is try to get them to change their laugh pattern. And it's also unexplainable to me. I really do not understand what happens with "giggle" incontinence, but the only thing I suggest to them is, make sure that, before they stand in the corner with their girlfriends, they go to the toilet. At least if they're going to lose their urine, they'll lose less. Also, they should try not to explode with laughter. Well, you know, you hate to see a young girl not being able to giggle. That's a real problem.

—A. BARRY BELMAN, MD

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